



GREENSBORO URBAN AREA Metropolitan Planning Organization

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of March 19, 2003

3:00 p.m. Greensboro, NC

Blue Room (County Commissioners' Briefing Room)

Old Guilford County Courthouse

TAC MEMBERS PRESENT

Sandy Carmany	TAC Chair
Don Vaughan	Greensboro City Council
Doug Galyon	NC Board of Transportation
Bob Landreth	Guilford County Commissioners
Mayor Keith Holliday	City of Greensboro
Jim Westmoreland	TCC Chair

ATTENDANCE

Tyler Meyer	GDOT/MPO	Jeff Sovich	GDOT/MPO
Scott Rhine	PART	Gregg Danzer	Town of Pleasant Garden
Craig McKinney	GDOT	Peggy Holland	GDOT
Tom Brown	Mayor of Oak Ridge	Bill Wright	Mayor of Pleasant Garden
Libby James	GDOT/GTA	John Hunsinger	NCDOT – Division 7
Adam Fischer	GDOT	Angie Nail	Emert Reporting Services
Kimberly Hinton	NCDOT – Statewide Planning		

Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at 3:15 p.m.

A quorum was not present at the time the meeting was called to order. As such, the sequence of agenda items was adjusted to begin with Business Item 1, PART Update. Once a quorum of TAC members was present, the meeting agenda resumed its normal sequence.

Business Items

1. PART Update: Regional Transit Major Investment Study

Scott Rhine distributed copies of an executive summary of the study to the Committee and reviewed background information. The General Assembly appropriated funds for commuter rail and inter-city passenger rail projects in 1997. The funding was limited to these studies and included a mix of State funds and federal highway funds. The MIS was intended to satisfy federal requirements for developing a regional transit concept, demonstrating that it is needed, and conducting an alternatives analysis.

Scott Rhine further noted that two alternatives were included in the study: regional rail (diesel multiple unit) and bus rapid transit (BRT). Each alternative included the same general connections though the routes sometimes varied between them: three segments coming out of High Point (to Winston-Salem, to the airport, and to Greensboro). To compare cost, environmental impacts and ridership, the east/west corridor was divided into three segments. For these three segments, the average cost per rider ratio is roughly \$19.50.

Additional work will need to be conducted before achieving the next step: to seek approval to begin the preliminary engineering phase of the east/west corridor. Getting to this step will require an improved travel demand model that will better assess transit options. It will also require the MPOs add the projects to their Long Range Transportation Plans. Securing federal approvals for this project to move ahead by the assumed timeline of 2012 will be challenging.

Mayor Keith Holliday commented that it would be important to be able to add more stations into the system, and that those stations be located consistent with the city's comprehensive plan, with regard to where and how the City is growing, including the potential for extending spurs from the main line. The system also needs to be as user-friendly as possible so that people will want to use it.

(With the arrival of other TAC members, the meeting proceeded according to the sequence in the published agenda.)

Action Items

1. Approval of Minutes of February 19, 2003

Kimberly Hinton requested that her introduction as Greensboro's new coordinator within the NCDOT Statewide Planning Branch be reflected in the minutes. She also requested that the minutes be clarified under Business Item 4, Further Consideration of Southwest Metropolitan Area Boundary Line to more accurately reflect the timeline and events that had transpired in this process. MPO staff indicated that the requested changes would be made.

Bob Landreth moved for the approval of the minutes of February 19, 2003 meeting, as amended. Don Vaughan seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as amended.

2. Amend FY '03 PWP and FY '04 UPWP

Tyler Meyer reported to the Committee that the proposed amendments are procedural in nature. At the end of each fiscal year, unspent PL funds that remain in the Planning Work Program, are frozen for two years before they are able to be accessed again. This situation is the result of NCDOT accounting procedures. These amendments would allow the PL funds anticipated to be unspent during the current fiscal year to be programmed directly into next year's Unified Planning Work Program. The anticipated amount of unspent funds to be shifted is \$90,000. The proposed amendments would simultaneously amend both work programs to accomplish this shift.

Mayor Keith Holliday moved for approval of the amendment. Don Vaughan seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Jim Westmoreland noted that Kimberly Hinton's observation that with recent efforts made by the Statewide Planning Branch, the amount of time that unspent PL funds are inaccessible has been reduced to around one year.

3. Triad Regional Travel Demand Model MOAs

Jeff Sovich stated that the two memoranda were developed by the four MPOs in the Triad, PART and NCDOT. These documents would replace those that were introduced and adopted by the MPO in April of 2002. The main MOA establishes the criteria and procedures for development and use of the Triad Regional Travel Demand Model. The supplemental MOA establishes the criteria and procedures for maintenance of the model on an ongoing basis. It clarifies the role that PART would play in the planning and model upkeep process. These MOAs have been approved by NCDOT, prior to submittal to the MPOs. The recommended action is to approve the memoranda of agreement for the Triad Regional Demand Model.

Bob Landreth moved for the approval of the memorandum. Don Vaughan seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

4. Approve 2004-2010 MTIP for State Purposes

Jeff Sovich reported that the 2004-2010 MTIP document began with a draft version that was distributed in December of 2002, which has since been revised. The revised document includes updates to the highway and transit projects, public comments received, and updated information regarding the federal financial outlook. The schedules for some highway projects have changed slightly. Major projects that experienced changes are the Eastern Urban Loop, Groometown Road widening, and Gallimore Dairy Road widening. The changes to these projects reflect shifts in the construction schedules needed to balance funds across program years. These changes show up as one-year delays in completion, but represent minor shifts of only a few months. The program of transit projects has also been updated. GTA's projects reflect revised cost assumptions and various shifts to optimize ratio among planning capital, operating, and maintenance expenditures. PART's revised project list reflects updated project cost assumptions. Additionally, for those PART projects which are anticipated to be located within multiple MPO areas, the total project costs have been divided proportionally.

Two public comments regarding the 2004-2010 MTIP have been received, which are now incorporated into the revised MTIP document. The comments include those submitted by Rockingham County regarding the Northern/Eastern Urban Loop and the NC 68/US 220 Connector, and those delivered by Sandy Carmany at the NCDOT Division 7 public meeting.

The revised MTIP now includes updated information on the federal financial outlook, specifically regarding the 2003 federal appropriations bill, which has been signed into law. This enactment establishes the 2003 federal highway funding amount at \$31.8 billion; the same as the 2002 level.

The MTIP adoption process and timeline have changed from what has been discussed in previous meetings. New FHWA guidance lays out an additional series of steps for demonstrating that the MTIP is consistent with the current LRTP and conformity analysis. The result is that final MTIP adoption is now expected in July 2003, following a formal Air Quality Conformity Finding. Until then, the NCDOT has requested MPO endorsement of the program of projects in the MTIP to support the adoption of the State TIP. The recommended action is to approve the revised MTIP for state purposes.

Don Vaughan moved for approval of the amendment. Bob Landreth seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

5. Roger Sheats' Letter on G.S. 136-200.4

Tyler Meyer stated that the purpose of the letter from Deputy Secretary Roger Sheats is to clarify interpretation and implementation of the NC General Statutes, Section 136-200.4. The apparent purpose of this section is to achieve higher levels of coordination and cooperation among the metropolitan areas of the state. One provision discussed in the Sheats letter concerns the requirement for a unified strategy for achieving conformity among adjacent MPOs. In particular, this provision states that adjacent MPOs in non-attainment areas have one year to consult on and develop appropriate emissions reduction strategies, and to then incorporate those strategies into their long-range transportation plans. The problem with the interpretation in the letter is that a third criteria is added, which is that the MPOs achieve conformity. So, if for some reason conformity lapses, the MPOs are consequently in violation of this statute, and subject to sanctions above and beyond those imposed by federal regulations. The proposed resolution seeks further clarification on the interpretation of the provisions in question, as well as an effort by NCDOT to engage the MPOs in a consultation process with affected stakeholders, so that a more appropriate policy can be devised. The recommended action is to take action in response to the letter, specifically by approving the proposed resolution.

Mayor Keith Holliday asked why the General Assembly would not be responsible for providing interpretation of the bill. Tyler Meyer advised that NCDOT is in charge of developing the policy for implementing the law.

Jim Westmoreland commented that no direct consultation was made with the Greensboro MPO or other MPOs regarding this clarification, and it doesn't appear a copy was sent to Mike Bruff, the new Statewide Planning Branch Manager.

Mayor Keith Holliday moved for approval of adopting the resolution expressing disagreement with some provisions of the letter. Bob Landreth seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Business Items (Resumed)

2. Airport Area Transportation Study

Tyler Meyer stated that the Airport Area Transportation Study stakeholders have identified a recommended alternative. The alternative includes a direct connection between I-40 and the Business 40 split, extending across NC 68 to the Oak Ridge Road interchange at Bryan Boulevard. Further environmental work will be needed to more precisely define the alignments of the facilities proposed by the recommended alternative.

The next step in this process includes a joint public meeting in April with PART. This meeting would include topics on the recommendations of the study and would present the proposed Thoroughfare Plan amendment to be submitted to the TAC for adoption in May.

Mayor Keith Holliday asked when actual traffic impact numbers would be available for the public to know how much traffic would be taken off of I-40 with the addition of these two connections. Jim Westmoreland advised that those numbers are currently available.

Jim Westmoreland recognized the important contributions that PART has made in coordinating this study. He added that strong endorsements would be needed to secure additional funding for the implementation of the recommended alternative.

Sandy Carmany asked if this information would be available to the public prior to the meeting. Tyler Meyer advised that the information would not be ready until the study is complete.

3. Current Studies: Elm-Eugene Street Widening & Cone Boulevard Extension

Adam Fischer illustrated the Elm-Eugene Street improvement project from Vandalia Road to North of the Urban Loop interchange. This project was identified as part of the City of Greensboro's 2000 transportation bond package. A feasibility study has been completed for the interchange. A preliminary design is underway on this project.

Jim Westmoreland commented that the business community has interest in the land use opportunities that will be created and favors accelerating this project. A developer with an active project in the vicinity is paying for the planning and design portion of the Elm-Eugene Street widening.

Adam Fischer stated that this project would be let to contract in the Spring of 2004 with a completion date of 2005. The roadways are going to be four-lane median-divided facilities with sidewalks on each side. The estimated cost is \$2.8 million.

He also reported on the Cone Boulevard Extension project. The City plans to extend Cone Boulevard eastward to the Eastern Urban Loop at Hines Chapel Road, and extending Nealtown Road north to intersect Cone Boulevard. The extension of Cone Boulevard would create a new alternate access into White Street landfill. Work on the feasibility study for the extension of Cone Boulevard to the Nealtown Road intersection will continue through April. The contract letting time for this project is expected to be Spring 2004, with completion in twelve to eighteen months.

Jim Westmoreland noted that the connection of Cone Boulevard from Nealtown Road to the Urban Loop would provide additional access to the City's recently acquired indoor soccer facility and to nearby recreational amenities. A funding source for the remainder of this connection has yet to be identified. The City Council is looking to work with the General Assembly to obtain funding for this interchange, as well as the interchange at the Fleming to Lewiston Connector Road, by inclusion in the statutory definition of the Greensboro Urban Loop, thereby making both eligible for Highway Trust Funds.

4. Other Strategic Reports

Update on Mobility Greensboro (Long Range Public Transportation Plan)

Libby James distributed a handout regarding the completed work on the study. The Long Range Public Transportation Plan comprehensive study is underway and continues to make progress. GTA would provide innovative services to offer a variety of travel choices to all citizens/visitors to the Greensboro area. A telephone survey of current transit non-users showed that 40% of the respondents were regular transit users before moving to the Greensboro area, and that 55% of these former users stopped using transit when they moved to Greensboro because they had gained access to a car or because the available routes did serve their travel needs. Over 70% of the respondents indicated the biggest drawback to public transportation is that the service is not as convenient as a car, and that it takes too long to travel on the bus. The Mobility Greensboro study also includes a public outreach program. The program is underway and a range of opportunities is being developed. The first consensus-building workshop will be held Thursday, March 27, from 2:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Greensboro Public Library.

Jim Westmoreland emphasized the importance of this study and encouraged input from the TAC Committee. The outcome of the study needs support continued growth and improvement of the local inner-city transportation option as much as possible to advance a long-term solution for regional transportation challenges.

Other Items

1. Board Member Update

Doug Galyon advised that the Governor's "North Carolina Moving Ahead" initiative is progressing nicely. Jim Westmoreland commended Doug Galyon and local staff for contacting GDOT and asking for input on projects or priorities as it relates to this program.

2. Town Update Opportunity

Gregg Danzer noted a recent News & Record article concerning the acceleration of the Greensboro Advanced Signal System project and a delay to the US 421 Interchanges project. He asked whether the US 421 interchanges project would be delayed, and said that the Town of Pleasant Garden would prefer the MPO pursue other funding sources for the signal system that would not delay the US 421 project. Mayor Bill Wright of Pleasant Garden reiterated the Town's concern about potential delays to this project and asked if any other funding options could be pursued.

Jim Westmoreland noted that the US 421 project was a funding source because 1) it is funded with CMAQ funds, a source that is well suited to signal system work; and 2) the delay to the project can be minimized.

Tyler Meyer noted that the signal system has been accelerated to 2008. The order of interchange construction has been reversed to better meet area transportation needs: the Woody Mill Road Interchange is now scheduled for right-of-way starting in FY 06 and construction in FY 09. The Neely Road Interchange is now scheduled for right-of-way starting in FY 09 and construction post years. Current assumptions are that construction on this interchange can be expected to begin in FY 11 or FY 12. The project essentially remains on track, but with a one to two year delay for construction of the second interchange.

Gregg Danzer asked if there is an opportunity to install a temporary traffic signal at either of these intersections, particularly at the Company Mill Road intersection, in recognition of need for improved safety for school traffic at that location. Doug Galyon stated that Division 7 will investigate that request.

3. Regional Update

Sandy Carmany stated that she is serving on the Steering Committee of the Triad Early Action Compact, and has accepted the vice-chair position on that committee.

4. Wrap-Up Items

Jim Westmoreland stated that Doug Galyon has been re-elected to serve another term as Chairman of the State Board of Transportation.

Tyler Meyer introduced Peggy Holland. She is the new Transportation Planner/Engineer for GDOT.

The TAC adjourned at 4:55 p.m.